

Karyn L. Hollis -- Testimony for the Subcommittee on Elections of the Committee on House Administration and Hearing on Robo-Calls, December 6, 2007

During the days preceding the election of November 7, 2006, my family received an unwanted barrage of automated, recorded calls to our home phone number in Wynnewood, PA. I would estimate that we received up to 4 robo-calls a day during that weekend before the election.

The calls had numerous scripts, but all were critical of Lois Murphy, the Democratic candidate for congress in our 6th district. These calls were frequent, irritating and misleading. The script typically began with the upbeat announcement, "Hi. I'm calling with information about Lois Murphy," leading the listener to believe that the call was coming from the Murphy campaign. Furthermore, the tone was cheery, giving the listener the impression that the information was going to be positive. Both of these assumptions were incorrect. As the recording continued, the script turned negative regarding Murphy.

Although I can't remember exactly what was said in the calls, I do remember that they were critical of Lois Murphy, and at the time I recall feeling angry because the information presented was false. I knew what Murphy's positions were on the issues, and they weren't being truthfully represented in these calls. Voters were indeed being misled by them.

I went so far as to file a complaint with the Federal Communications Commission because I believed that these calls had broken some campaigning laws. The fact that these calls were made and paid for by the Republican Party was not indicated at the beginning of the call as is legally mandated.

All during the last few days before November 7 election, I heard family, friends and neighbors in our district complaining about the content and frequency of these calls. Some said they were so fed up with the calls that they didn't even feel like voting anymore. Since the speakers in the Robo-Calls were not clearly identified, some voters were under the impression that the calls were coming from the Murphy campaign. I found this misconception particularly disturbing, and I believe it could have cost Murphy some votes.

I believe that these types of harassing calls should be stopped. Because of them some voters were likely discouraged from going to the polls due to their anger at candidates like Murphy whom they erroneously believed instigated the calls, or because of the misinformation and falsehoods spread by the calls about candidates that previously had decided to vote for.

I hope you will take action against this electorally chilling activity.

Thank you for listening to my views and experiences.

